



BlueCross BlueShield  
of Alabama

SPRING 2022

# HEART HEALTH NEWSLETTER

Information to help you improve your health from  
**Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama**



Stay healthy and prevent future problems with regular check-ups and proper heart management now. Blue Advantage can even help you stay on track. If you enroll in the Blue Advantage Rewards and Wellness Program, you can earn rewards for completing healthy behaviors like preventive screenings and heart-healthy activities. [AlabamaBlue.com/BlueAdvantageRewards](https://AlabamaBlue.com/BlueAdvantageRewards)

## The More You Know

- Heart health
- Hypertension
- Cholesterol

## Take Control

- Medication adherence
- RX Savings Solutions
- When to seek care

**Blue Advantage**  
A Medicare Approved PPO



## The More You Know

Talk to your doctor about preventive screenings related to the heart and educate yourself on your own risks.

### HEART HEALTH FAQ

#### WHAT IS IT?

A state of complete wellbeing for your heart. Heart-healthy living is understanding your risks and making daily choices to lower your chances of getting heart disease.

#### WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?

The top risk factors for strokes are heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, obesity, unhealthy diet, and low physical activity.

#### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO KEEP YOUR HEART HEALTHY?

Keep your blood pressure and cholesterol within

normal range (see page 3), take any prescribed medications as directed by your doctor, and eat a healthy diet.


#### HOW DO YOU EAT HEART-HEALTHY?

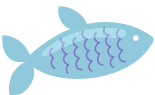
The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends a diet that can help reduce the major risk factors for heart disease, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure. Follow these tips to achieve a healthier diet.


#### IS THERE A CURE FOR HEART DISEASE?


No. It will have to be managed through careful monitoring and different treatments. →


### Choose:

**Fats and Oils** - All fats should be eaten sparingly. Try to choose “good” fats like olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil, olives, nuts and avocados that may help lower your cholesterol levels. 

 **Fish** - The recommended amount of fish is two 3.5-ounce servings per week, with each portion being about the size of a deck of cards. Tuna, salmon and mackerel are favorable because they have high omega-3 fatty acids, which helps your heart *and* your brain.

 **Dairy** - Healthy adults should aim for 3 cups of dairy each day. Choose dairy that is low-fat or fat-free.

**A variety of fruits and vegetables** - Try to eat at least 4 ½ cups daily. 

 **Whole grains** - The suggested amount is three 1-ounce servings a day. 1 ounce is equal to 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of oatmeal or 1/2 cup of cooked rice, pasta or cereal. Look for the word “whole” in the ingredient list.

**Limit fast food and processed meat** - Typically high in saturated fats, which can increase your cholesterol and risk of heart disease. No more than two servings of processed meat per week is recommended.



# Hypertension

**Reduce health threats.** Improve your quality of life by talking to your healthcare provider about managing your high blood pressure.

## WHAT IS IT?

Hypertension is a fancy word for high blood pressure (HBP). Every time your heart beats, blood pumps into your arteries. Your blood pressure is highest during each heartbeat and is known as systolic pressure (the top number). Diastolic pressure (the bottom number) occurs when your heart is resting, and your blood pressure falls. For example, when you check your blood pressure, the reading will look like 120/80, which means 120 is your systolic and 80 is diastolic.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC (UPPER NUMBER)	AND/OR	DIASTOLIC (LOWER NUMBER)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	AND	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120 – 129	AND	LESS THAN 80
HYPERTENSION	130 – HIGHER	OR	80 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	AND/OR	HIGHER THAN 120

## WHY DO YOUR NUMBERS MATTER?

Having high blood pressure can damage your heart and other parts of the body.

## HOW DO YOU PREVENT AND MANAGE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

Adopt a heart-healthy lifestyle. Try to:

- 1 **Create an exercise routine specifically for you**
- 2 **Quit smoking**
- 3 **Manage stress**
- 4 **Put together a healthy diet plan**



*High Blood Pressure can lead to stroke, blindness, heart attack, heart failure, kidney failure and sexual dysfunction when left untreated. Simple, daily blood pressure checks are the first step to better health.*



# Lowering Cholesterol Levels

## High Cholesterol

### WHAT IS IT?

Cholesterol involves many parts and big words, so to simplify it, cholesterol is a waxy, fatty substance made in the liver. Not all cholesterol is bad for the human body, but at the wrong level, cholesterol severely increases your risk for heart disease, heart attack, or stroke without showing any warning signs.

### WHAT CAUSES HIGH CHOLESTEROL?

Genetics can play an important part in your cholesterol number.

### WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS OF HIGH CHOLESTEROL?

Though some patients may experience the following symptoms, high cholesterol is often diagnosed through regular lab work by your physician, which is why frequent check ups are vital.

- ✓ Nausea
- ✓ Extreme fatigue
- ✓ Numbness or coldness in extremities
- ✓ Numbness
- ✓ Chest pain or angina
- ✓ High blood pressure
- ✓ Slurred speech
- ✓ Shortness of breath

*Are you taking statins? Talk to your doctor about possible side effects, as they may mirror these warning signs.*

### HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR NUMBERS LOW?

Take your cholesterol medicines and make health healthy choices in your food daily.

*High cholesterol is connected with a higher risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Ask your doctor how often you should have your cholesterol checked.*



# Take Control

of your current heart health and preventive care.

## Medication Adherence

### WHAT IS IT?

It simply means taking your prescribed medications as directed by your doctor.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

It is vital to consistently take your medications in order to gain and stay in control of your heart health. Make sure to take your medications as prescribed and around the same time every day.

### HOW DO YOU STAY ON TRACK?

Use a pillbox to help keep track of your medications. If you are using multiple medications, reduce the number of trips to the pharmacy by having your pharmacist align your prescription refills. Additionally, you can ask about switching to a 90-day supply for your medications, which could save you money on your prescriptions at preferred pharmacies.

### WHAT IS DOSE PACKING AND HOW CAN IT HELP YOU?

Dose Packaging is a service that divides your medications into individually packaged pouches to simplify your medication routine. Talk to your local preferred pharmacy regarding this service. If you would prefer to have your medication pouches delivered directly to your house, choose from our preferred home delivery options below that offer dose packaging (at no additional expense).

#### ExactCare Pharmacy

Call 1-844-200-6884 and speak with a trained agent, or visit their website: [enroll.exactcarepharmacy.com/bcbs-alabama](http://enroll.exactcarepharmacy.com/bcbs-alabama)

#### PillPack by Amazon Pharmacy

Call 1-866-332-1668 and speak with a trained agent, or visit their website: [www.pillpack.com](http://www.pillpack.com)

Other Pharmacies are available in our network.

## Rx Savings Solutions

### HOW CAN BLUE ADVANTAGE HELP?

Blue Advantage offers a medication-shopping tool called Rx Savings Solutions. This tool will allow members to see the cost of drug options based on their real-time benefits. You can set communication preferences and be alerted when savings options are available to you based on your prescribed medications.

This tool will ensure you are taking medication that is not just appropriate but also the most affordable. If the tool suggests a better option, you can request a prescription from your doctor with just a few clicks!



**SIGN UP TODAY** by calling

**1-800-268-4476**

**TTY: 1-800-877-8973**

**or by visiting**

[myrxss.com/BlueAdvantage](http://myrxss.com/BlueAdvantage)



# Have questions related to your health?

**Take control** with our exclusive Chronic Condition program.

Call **1-888-341-5030**  
TTY: 711 Monday-Friday  
8:00am-4:45pm CST to speak to your Blue Advantage nurse.

## WHEN TO SEEK CARE:

**Call 911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if you're experiencing symptoms such as:

- ✓ Chest pain
- ✓ Difficulty breathing
- ✓ Unable to move or speak normally

*ExactCare is an independent company providing in-home medication management services and support to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama members.*

*PillPack, Inc., an Amazon company, is an independent online pharmacy which packages and delivers medications to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama members.*

*Rx Savings Solutions is an independent company working with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama to help members find lower price options for prescription medication.*

*Blue Advantage (PPO) is provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.*

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## CALL YOUR DOCTOR NOW OR SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- ✓ Have a fever and not feeling better after a few days.
- ✓ Vomit or have diarrhea for more than 6 hours
- ✓ Think you have a problem with your medicine

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